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Soviet Stress on Philby Case Attacks West's Intelligence

THE UNCHARACTERISTIC game being played by the Soviet Union over the case of the British traitor Kim Philby, whose infamy in Soviet double-service they are exploiting before the world in a total reversal of all past Kremlin policy of a stony silence upon any and all intelligence coups, is raising clear historical echoes.

Veteran Western intelligence men on both sides of the Atlantic believe that the Russians are using the Philby affair for a propaganda attack upon American and British secret services, much as three decades ago they used the Popular-Front technique to condemn both countries and also to pave the way for their own sell-out to the Nazis.

In those old days the Communist line was that while Hitler was perhaps a bad fellow, so, too, were the American and British "ruling classes" and their "Colonel Blimps." Thus, if Hitler was seeking the destruction of England, it was anyhow a rotten upper-class England and so why get excited? Most of all, why involve good Americans in the caldron of war?

In a word, the undoubted shortcomings of two old Western democratic societies, whose principal crime in fact had been a long dose of self-delusion toward the hideous menace of Hitlerism, were equated with a certain small shortcoming on the German side.

This was the mere reality of a deliberate Nazi policy for the extermination of millions of men and women and children who were held to be offensive to the master race.

It was, tragically, a line that attracted thousands of mostly young American and British intellectuals who were, when all is said and done, simply reaching out for any kind of self-justification for their wish to "stay out of the war." The line collapsed, of course, when the Hitler-Stalin Pact broke and Hitler invaded Russia.

THIS COLUMNIST well remembers a news conference by Earl Browder, then head of the American Communist Party, in which he solemnly explained that a war which only yesterday

had been a mad-dog adventure between the imperialist bandits Britain and Germany was now a Holy War for the salvation of true democratic values—and of course of the Popular Front.

Now, the analogy between the old gimmick and the new is not really quite so iffy as it might seem. For in both cases the true and central targets are those first-line Western institutions that are most desperately vital to Western safety and interests—Foreign Offices and Intelligence apparatuses.

The way the Russians are handling the Philby episode thus may be seen as not only an utter turn-about from past habits in the defector and counter-defector game, but also as—again—intended primarily to recruit the sympathies not of Communists but only of the credulous in the West.

Philby, for 10 years as a high British secret service officer, was in fact a double agent for the Kremlin. The old Moscow would never have admitted that there had ever been a Philby; the new Moscow builds up the sales of the Philby sagas, trots him out to press conferences and incessantly pushes the critical point: Here was an untypically able Western agent who so easily duped the worn-out, decadent "establishment" types in London—meantime gulling God knows how

many priceless secrets out of the American Central Intelligence Agency.

AND THE COUNTER-POINT? Why, it is to show what incompetent fools are now operating all Western intelligence.

Indeed, Hugh Trevor Roper, a Briton who ably did the spy bit during the war for the Allies, interprets this to mean that Western spying is scoring over the Soviet kind and thus that Moscow has turned to attempts to discredit by propaganda what it cannot by deeds defeat in the shadowy world of intelligence.

Maybe this estimate gives our side a bit too much; but if it is not on target as to precise Russian motivations it is in the center of the bull's-eye on the nature of the Russian motivation and at whom it is aimed.

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